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ABSTRACT

This fact sheet is designed to give those working with newly arrived Cubans in the United States a brief refresher on Cuban geography and history, especially the history of Cuba's relations with the United States. It reviews events that have brought Cubans to the United States, and discusses the values newcomers are likely to have brought with them and the repercussions these values might have for resettlement in this country. In discussions about Cubans coming to the United States, it is important to distinguish between immigrants who have come as a result of normal immigration visas and those who have left their native country without permission of their government. There are well over a million Cubans in the United States, with the majority in Florida. The most recent wave of Cuban arrivals peaked in the summer of 1994 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the economic changes it brought to Cuba. There is a perception that this wave of refugees, also termed parolees, is in general well-educated, professional, and highly motivated, and that these most recent arrivals are being absorbed into the community of Miami (Florida) with a minimum of problems. (Contains 39 references.) (SLD)

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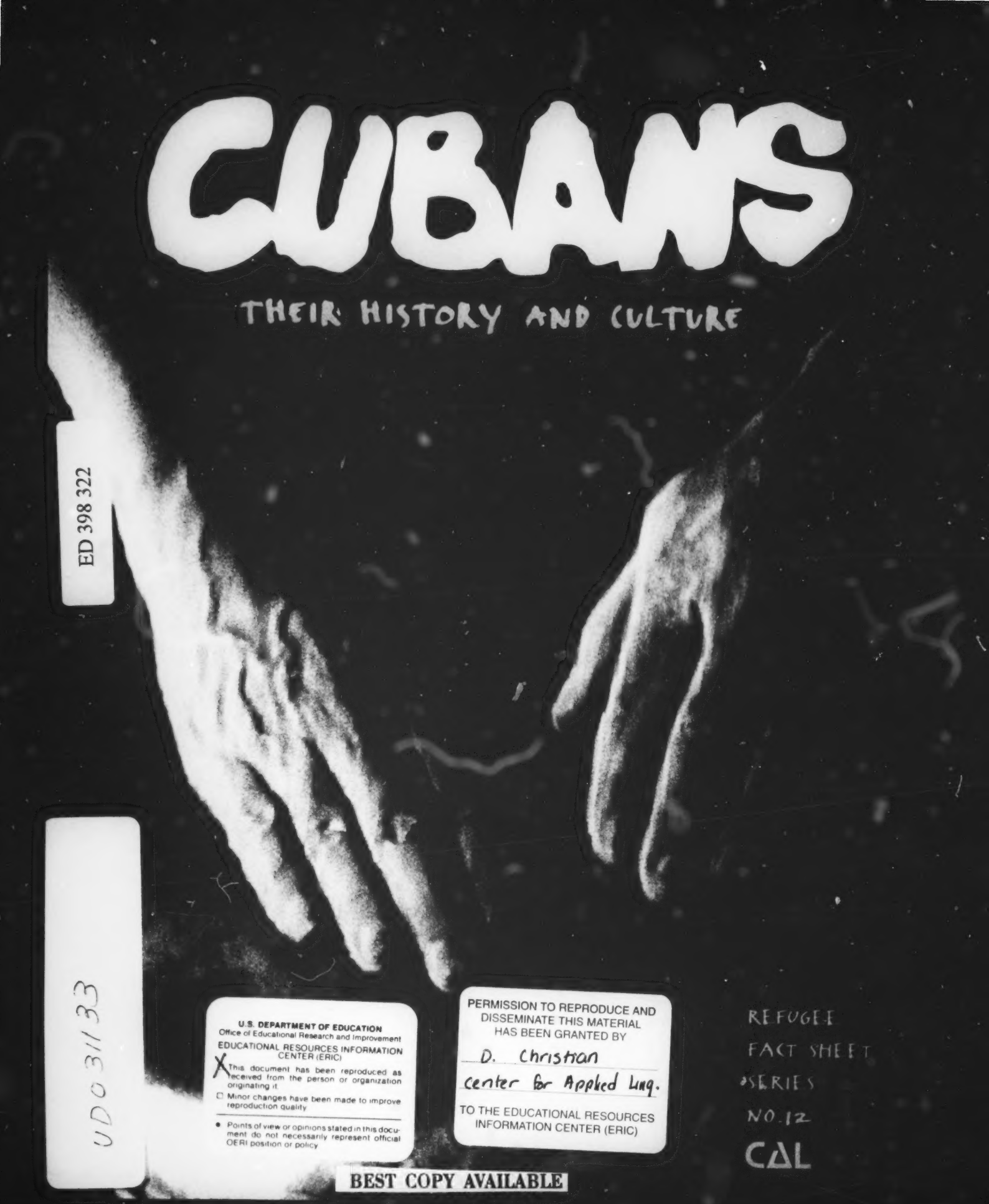
CUBANS

THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE



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REFUGEE FACT SHEET SERIES NO. 12

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CAL Refugee Fact Sheet Series No. 12

The Cubans

THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE

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Preface

We would like to thank our colleagues at CAL who, as always, have made valuable contributions to this booklet. Michele Burtoff Civan conducted the preliminary research and gathering of sources. Judy Jameson of CAL's Sunbelt Office in Sarasota, Florida, compiled most of the information and bibliography on Cuban communities in the United States. Allene Grognet, also of CAL's Sunbelt Office, commented on an early draft and provided suggestions and common sense throughout the development process. And Donald A. Ranard read and commented on a draft via long-distance from Sri Lanka.

Various drafts of the booklet have been read and commented on by a number of reviewers. We have incorporated all of their comments, and the booklet is stronger for them. Our sincere thanks go to:

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Barbara Robson

Introduction

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1990, its economic support for Cuba also dissolved, and the economy of Cuba very quickly began to suffer the consequences. The Cuban government's various responses to those consequences have caused a new wave of immigration from Cuba, and American service providers are finding themselves once again with large numbers of Cubans needing language training and social services.

At the same time, there is greater communication between the two countries, leading some to speculate that normalization of relations may take place. Others continue to maintain, however, that no such eventuality will take place while Castro is still in power.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to give those working with the most recently arrived Cubans a brief refresher on Cuban geography and history, particularly the history of Cuba's relations with the United States. The fact sheet brings readers up-to-date on events in Cuba that have resulted in the recent flows of Cubans to Florida. It discusses values the newcomers are likely to have brought with them and the repercussions these values might have for their resettlement in the United States. The fact sheet concludes with a brief sketch of Cuban Spanish and lists some of the linguistic problems that Cubans are likely to encounter in their learning of English.

The number of Cubans in the United States is well over a million, or about a tenth as many Cubans as are in Cuba itself.

Different terms are used to refer to the Cubans in the United States. *Exile* is the term usually given to the first wave of Cubans entering the country after the 1959 revolution. The term *refugee* is applied to Cubans who have entered the country as refugees, that is, those who have been given the special refugee status which places them in a different category from ordinary immigrants. Cubans entering the country recently are sometimes referred to as *parolees*, reflecting the State Department's "parole" category; parolees are eligible for the same range of public services as refugees. The term *immigrant* is now also being used to refer to the Cubans entering the country via Havana, and reflects their status as ordinary immigrants.

In discussions about the Cubans coming to the United States, it is important to remember the basic distinction between normal immigrants, who have obtained immigrant visas and who are leaving their native country legally, and others—refugees, parolees, undocumented aliens, etc.—who have effectively left their native countries without the permission of their governments, and who therefore have not been in a position to obtain immigrant visas. We will use the term *immigrant* to refer exclusively to Cubans who have entered the United States with immigrant visas.

The number of Cubans in the United States is well over a million, or about a tenth as many Cubans as are in Cuba itself. Half a million Cubans are in south Florida, the other half million spread out across the United States, with large communities in New York, New Jersey,

Illinois, and California. In a community this size, there is of course diversity, but in general the Cuban community is perceived as adamantly opposed to Castro's revolutionary government and any "give" in the United States' relations with that government. This stereotype is probably due in great measure to the publicity given the Cuban American National Foundation and its lobbying arm The Cuban American Foundation. These conservative organizations were founded in 1981 and constitute a well-organized, powerful, and wealthy voice in U.S. politics, especially in Florida.

Information from the anti-Castro elements of the Cuban community tends to be entirely negative about Castro's Cuba. Information from the more liberal elements of the Cuban community tends to be more positive. Official information from Cuba itself is of course pro-Cuba and puts the country's best foot forward, but is additionally suspect in that the government controls the media and prohibits any expression of dissent.

Cuba is an archipelago roughly 90 miles south of Florida.

In compiling this fact sheet, we have tried to present as balanced a picture as possible. In the bibliography, we have listed what we hope is a representative group of sources, along with annotations which indicate roughly where each source's opinion lies. We urge readers to follow up on these sources.

The Land and Its Economy

Cuba is an archipelago made up of some 1600 islands, islets, and cays (=keys) in the Caribbean Sea, roughly 90 miles south of Florida. The largest island—Cuba itself—is a long, narrow island covering about 41,000 square miles, approximately the same area as Pennsylvania. Running roughly west to east, Cuba forms a boundary between the Atlantic and the Caribbean.

The capital city is Havana, on the northwest coast, with a population of about 2 million. Other major cities include Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, and Santa Clara.

Cuba has extensive plains, fertile soil, plenty of water from rainfall (the rainy season is from May to October) and underground sources, and a tropical climate like Miami's. The farmlands and climate support two crops a year with sensible land management and attention to soil renewal. Although the island is in danger every year from the same hurricanes that threaten the southeast United States, in most years the crops are brought in safely.

Sugar has always been Cuba's dominant crop, and its export has formed the basis for the Cuban economy since sugar cultivation was established by the Spanish colonial government in the 16th century. Cuban tobacco is some of the finest in the world, and one of the most publicly regretted effects of the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba is that Cuban cigars are not legally importable. Cuban citrus is also excellent, and there are extensive deposits of nickel, used extensively in manufacturing (nickel is one of the elements in stainless steel).

Cuba has always needed a large and steady if not sympathetic market for its sugar and other exports. At first, Spain supplied the market, when Cuba was a colony of that country. Even before independence at the end of the 19th century, the United States had developed into the most important buyer of Cuban exports, and extended this relationship during the first half of the 20th century. After the revolution in 1959 and the American embargo, the Soviet Union took the United States' place as Cuba's major market and supplier. Now, with the Soviet Union in dissolution and the U.S. embargo still in place, Cuba has no single dominant market, although it trades extensively with Spain, Canada, and Mexico, and is suffering heavily from the lack of hard currency to pay for imports.

The Cuban People

Cuba has a population of about 10.8 million.

Cuba has a population of about 10.8 million, 70% of whom live in the cities. The population is a mixture of Caucasian descendants of the original settlers from Spain and black descendants of the slave population imported from Africa in the 18th and 19th centuries. There is a sizable Chinese population, descendants of the Chinese workers who immigrated to Cuba during the latter half of the 19th century, and a smattering of other nationalities. These populations have mixed and intermarried over the centuries, and the Cuban population today is its own distinct combination: Some Cubans are white, some are black, some are Asian, and some are of mixed heritage.

Historically, much of the Cuban population worked in agriculture, full time or just during the sugar harvest. Now, however, only a fifth of the work force is engaged in agriculture. Many more Cubans—30%—are employed in the government or government services; another 22% are employed in industry (including sugar processing); and the rest of the work force is in commerce, transportation, or communications.

There has been, over the centuries, a strong element of racial

discrimination in Cuba. Until the latter half of the 19th century, the black population of Cuba was mostly slaves, although a community of free black workers gradually established itself. After independence and throughout the first half of the 20th century, the various governments were massively inattentive to the living conditions of the poor, many of whom were black. The Castro revolution was in great part dedicated to the improvement of precisely this population, and to some extent the revolutionary government has been successful—mainly through programs of education and public health—in benefiting all the less advanced sectors of the population. Upward mobility for blacks, women, and peasants has improved considerably, although they are still underrepresented in the high levels of government and the communist party: Large numbers of blacks and women have achieved skilled, professional, and managerial positions, and blacks have particularly found advancement in military careers and in Cuba's highly successful sports programs.

Cubans have a very strong sense of cultural identity.

Cuban Nationalism

For several reasons, Cubans have a very strong sense of "Cubanidad," cultural identity. This sense of cultural identity comes partially from a sense of place—Cuba as an island has clearly defined boundaries—and partially from the homogeneity of language and shared culture. It is a major factor in the relative stability of the revolutionary government in Cuba and in the stability of the Cuban community in the United States.

Despite the fact that within the Cuban-American community there is a great deal of political contention, the community forgets its differences in taking care of its own. One of the practical problems service providers face in working with newly-arrived Cubans is that they can function so comfortably within the Spanish-speaking Cuban-American communities: There is little motivation to learn English or move away to areas where there are better jobs.

Cuban Immigration to the United States

Given the closeness of Cuba to the United States—both geographical and, before the 1959 revolution, economic—it is no surprise that there has always been movement of people between the countries. The 1910 census showed that there were officially 15,133 Cubans living in the United States, and a report on immigration to Congress at the time included data on 44,211 Cubans. In 1959, an estimated 124,000 Cubans were living in the United States. In the early years of the revolutionary government, an additional 215,000 moved here, and now the Cuban community is well over a million. As we mentioned above, the center of that community is in Miami, but there are sizable communities in other cities in Florida and in New York, Illinois, and California as well.

The existence and size of the Cuban community in the United States is a result of both "push" and "pull" factors. The revolutionary

government's inflexible attitude toward dissent, and its imperviousness to demands that dissenters make, probably constitute the greatest push factors: Cubans who are unhappy have had no reason to believe that they can effect changes in their lives. Another strong push factor for the recent wave of newcomers is the economic situation and scarcity of crucially necessary goods like medicine.

The "pull" factor has been the United States' policy with regard to Cuban emigres, which has effectively been, until recently, an unqualified welcome for both documented (Cubans entering the United States through normal immigration procedures, including legal departure from Cuba) and undocumented (Cubans arriving in the United States without immigrant visas, who have usually left Cuba illegally). Until 1985, there was no quota for Cubans entering the United States via normal immigration procedures, as there was for other immigrant groups. Cuban undocumented entrants have always had special status: While entrants from other countries have been required to demonstrate that they were fleeing political persecution to be granted refugee status, it was officially assumed that anyone arriving in the United States from Cuba was a bona fide refugee and therefore had automatic access to the special benefits that refugees are entitled to. Cuban entrants have had other special privileges as well; since 1966, for example, the Attorney General has had discretionary power to guarantee permanent residency to any Cuban who has been in the United States for a year, including those on visitor's visas who have overstayed the period delineated in their visas.

There have been three basic waves of Cubans coming to the U.S.

There have been, since the revolution, three basic waves of Cubans coming to the United States. These groups tend to differ from one another in their opinions and values and have different acculturation experiences, depending partly on when and why they emigrated from Cuba, and partly on their reception in the U.S.

Soon After the Revolution (1959–early 1960s)

The Cubans who came to the United States during this period were undocumented and were welcomed by Americans as heroes who believed in values (such as capitalism) that were similar to those of most Americans. Further, these newcomers were thought to be similar to white, middle class Americans: businessmen, government officials, professionals, and managers and their families. Many were pro-United States and had had contacts with this country prior to arriving. Many wealthier Cuban families came here, both because they disagreed with the goals and methods of the revolution, and because it was the only way to salvage their financial assets. In addition to money, many brought with them skills, education, contacts, and intact families, all of which facilitated their adjustment to the United States. Many of these, however, originally viewed their stay in the United States as temporary and assumed they would be returning to Cuba. These individuals, now in their 60s or older, have by and large been successful here, creating a

strong community that is proud of its heritage. Many hold strong anti-Castro opinions and lobby American politicians to keep the pressure on the Castro government to bring it down.

Mid-Revolution (mid-1960s to mid-1980s)

The Cubans who emigrated to the United States during this period came for both political and economic reasons. They tended to be disillusioned with the direction or pace of change in Cuba within the revolution, as distinct from the earlier arrivals that were against the revolution *in toto*. The economic refugees in this wave tended to be less educated and less well off than the earlier wave and included "undesirables" such as criminals (political and otherwise), homosexuals, and mentally ill persons that Castro had taken advantage of the situation to expel from Cuba.

This was of course the period of the Mariel boatlift, which we will discuss below in the context of Cuban history. This group of Cubans, which became known as the *Marielitos*, arrived in the U.S. during an economic low period and were met with resentment and fear by both the U.S. public and the Cuban-American community. The fear was mainly a result of press and media accounts that sensationalized the existence in the group of the "undesirables," although subsequent more serious study of the *Marielitos* showed that the image was not a correct one. (Only about 1% turned out to be criminals by our standards, and that 1% was permanently detained and subject to deportation.) In fact, the *Marielitos'* overall education and job skills were similar to those of the general population in Cuba at the time and of many of the earlier Cuban arrivals. The Mariel entrants did include substantially more younger persons, mulattos, and blacks, however.

All the Cubans detained at Guantánamo have entered the United States.

Post-USSR Dissolution

The most recent wave of Cubans to the United States peaked in the summer of 1994. We will describe below the events that prompted some 33,000 Cubans to flee Cuba for the United States as well as the subsequent precedent-breaking American decision to refuse them entry.

As of the end of March, 1996, all 30,983 Cubans detained at Guantánamo have entered the United States as parolees. There is a perception that this latest wave of Cubans is in general well-educated, professional, and motivated, and they seem to be being absorbed into the community in Miami with a minimum of problems.

For the moment, Cuban immigration into the United States is proceeding more or less through official Cuban channels. An agreement reached between the United States and Cuba in September, 1994, expands the number of legal Cuban immigrants to 20,000 per year. About half of these immigrants have parolee rather than immigrant status in the United States, since they are admitted through the use of the Attorney General's parole authority. As parolees, they are eligible for refugee benefits and services not available to immigrants.

History

European Discovery: 1492

On October 27th, 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on Cuba, called Cubanacán by the natives who lived there. He found abou' 50,000 of them—the Ciboney and Guanahatabey in the west and the Taíno elsewhere. Thinking he had reached India, Columbus dubbed these natives "Indians," renamed the island Juana in honor of Prince Juan of Portugal, and, leaving the island undisturbed, sailed on to Hispaniola (present-day Haiti and Dominican Republic), where he founded the first Spanish settlement in the New World.

The Colonial Period: 1511–1895

Christopher Columbus landed on Cuba on October 27, 1492.

In 1511, Diego Velásquez and 300 men were sent from Hispaniola to establish a colony in Cuba. The Taínos had received word of the Spaniards' cruelty and mistreatment and tried to resist. The Spanish military strength soon conquered them, however, and within five years the island had been divided into seven municipal divisions, each with its own town council reporting to a royal council. A feudal-like system called *encomienda* was established whereby each conquistador was granted a set numb:r of Indians who had to pay tribute to the *encomendero* (grante:), while the grantee was responsible for the Indians' welfare and Christianization.

Disease, mistreatment, and dislocation soon decimated the Indian population. By 1550 it had dropped to 5,000, making the practice of *encomienda* untenable and lessening the attraction of the island to potential settlers. Those settlers were also discouraged by the scarcity of gold on the island, and most proceeded further to look for riches, especially in Peru and Mexico.

Those who stayed on the island concentrated on raising cattle and tobacco. They needed laborers and began to supp'ement the dwindling stock of native laborers with slaves imported from Africa. It was at this time also that cultivation of the sugar cane, which Columbus had introduced to the Caribbean, was begun.

A look at a map of the western hemisphere shows why Cuba quickly came to be strategically important as a colony of Spain, despite its lack of gold. Standing as it does at the entrance to the Gulf of Mexico from the Atlantic, it was the transit point for Spanish expeditions in the New World as well as the point of departure for the Spanish fleet system, which provided escort ships to protect the gold and riches being shipped back to Spain.

The end of the 16th century and most of the 17th century were marked by pirate activity. Spain prohibited its American colonies from trading with one another and with other European countries. To circumvent these strictures, rival European powers sponsored pirates and privateers who raided the Spanish merchant ships. These pirates at-

tacked not only Spanish ships, but also Cuban ports and towns; Havana was one of their favorite targets.

Cuban colonial society at the time was divided along color and class lines: Whites of Spanish descent were either *criollos* (Cuban-born) or *peninsulares* (Spanish-born), while blacks were either slaves or free. The biggest rivalries at this time existed between the *criollos* and the *peninsulares:* Although *criollos* could own land and acquire wealth, they were prohibited from holding the high administrative positions that brought the greatest prestige and wealth. In fact, much of the *peninsulares'* wealth was appropriated from the *criollos*. For example, as tobacco became more popular in Europe toward the end of the 17th century, Spain prohibited the *criollo* tobacco farmers from selling their product directly to Europe. They were forced instead to sell their product for low prices to tobacco monopolies owned by *peninsulares*, who then resold it for much higher prices to Spain and other European nations. The *criollos* could get around such restrictions by smuggling, but such treatment formed the impetus for the beginning of Cuban nationalism and resistance to Spanish control.

Sugar became the basis of the Cuban economy toward the end of the 18th century.

The 18th century was characterized by agricultural development and increased economic prosperity, mostly because conflicts in Europe made it difficult for Spain to keep tight control over its colonies. After the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which ended the War of Spanish Succession, England was permitted to bring slaves from Africa into Cuba. The subsequent increase in the Black slave population allowed the *peninsulares* to expand their sugar plantations, and led to the establishment of a sugar industry. In 1762, during the Seven Years' War, England attacked Cuba and held control of Havana for a year. During the English occupation, Havana was open to free trade with all nations, a situation which favored the importation of slaves and goods at low cost, and greatly stimulated both sugar and tobacco production. Toward the end of the century, the slave revolt and ensuing revolution in Haiti caused many French colonists to flee to Cuba, bringing skilled laborers and advanced sugar technology with them. This turn of events, combined with the lack of competition from Haiti, quickly made sugar the basis of the Cuban economy.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Cuba was enjoying remarkable prosperity, and several factors were at work to push toward independence from Spain and the abolition of slavery. Several factors were at work. First, the Black population was increasing, both naturally and through continuing importation of slaves from Africa, and many Cubans feared the kind of violence that had disrupted Haiti. Another factor was the continuing inflexibility and corruption of the Spanish colonial administration, which deepened resentment on the part of the *criollos* against the government. Yet another factor was the example of the United States, which 25 years earlier had gained its own independence from England, and which was increasingly divided over the issue

of slavery. The final factor was the example set by the Latin American countries' gaining their independence from Spain in the 1820s.

As a result of these and other pressures, Cubans of all backgrounds began to seek reforms and greater autonomy from Spain. Politically, Cubans fell into three basic categories: annexationists, separatists, and reformists. Annexationists desired independence from Spain and annexation to the United States. (There was strong support for this position in the slave-holding American South, but all three attempts at annexation failed because the abolitionist South and the North were absolutely opposed to the annexation of another slave-holding society.) Separatists wanted complete independence from Spain, and favored the abolition of slavery as well. Reformists wanted to remain part of Spain, but desired a separate constitution and much more autonomy.

All Cubans, regardless of political persuasion, had one thing in common: They no longer welcomed Spanish authority. This state of affairs resulted in a first attempt at revolution, carried on from 1868 to 1878 and called the Ten Years' War, revolved around the question of independence only; it was not over the slavery issue. Its lack of success made it clear to the revolutionaries that independence could be gained only if all Cubans, including free blacks and slaves, presented a united front.

José Martí was the most important figure in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain.

Between 1878 and 1895, there were other unsuccessful attempts at revolution. The most important figure at this time was the lawyer, poet, and journalist José Martí, whose writings and organizational activities among the Cubans living in the United States in the 1870s and 1880s propelled the revolution to the point where it could make a successful bid for independence.

In 1886, slavery was abolished in Cuba by royal decree. The abolition of slavery probably had as much to do with changing work conditions as it did with social justice: More efficient processing techniques had been developed, as had a new labor system involving free and contract workers as well as slaves.

Cuba was by now dependent on the United States as a market for sugar. The European market for Cuban sugar had dried up because European sugar beet producers had become successful at meeting the European demand for sugar. In the late 1890s, U.S. investment was estimated at $50 million, and annual trade was estimated at $100 million. The United States was therefore taking a great deal of interest in Cuba's fortunes, both as a near neighbor and as an important trading partner.

The War of Independence and U.S. Occupation: 1895–1902

The Cuban War of Independence broke out in February, 1895. In September, the revolutionaries proclaimed a new republic, and appointed a president and vice president. Cuba's general population supported the new republican government; the colonial government responded at first with brutal destruction of property and life, but later

established more conciliatory policies. The population was not satisfied with these new policies, however, and continued hostilities.

For three years the battles went on. At first, the United States did not recognize the new republican government, but there was a strong lobby to do so on the part of Americans involved in Cuban trade. By 1898, American representatives in Cuba were urging the United States not only to recognize the republican government, but also to assist the revolutionaries. In February, 1898, the *U.S.S. Maine* was sent to Havana harbor to protect U.S. citizens during riots in Havana, and on February 15th it exploded and sank, killing 266 people. Blaming Spain, the U.S. Congress passed resolutions demanding that Spain grant independence to Cuba, that the colonial government withdraw, and that President McKinley be authorized to use force to ensure that withdrawal. Viewing this as an act of aggression, Spain declared war on the United States in April, the United States immediately reciprocated, and the result was the Spanish-American War.

The Spanish-American War brought about Cuban independence from Spain.

With the United States in the picture, the war was won in short order, bringing a decisive end to the Spanish empire. Under the terms of the signed by Spain and the United States (but not Cuba!), Spain lost all its overseas possessions. Among other actions, Guam and Puerto Rico were ceded to the United States, and sovereignty of the Philippines was transferred to the United States for $20,000,000. Spain relinquished all claim to Cuba, but the United States had earlier announced its intention through the Teller Amendment not to establish control of Cuba.

Some Cuban revolutionaries welcomed U.S. military intervention, as they thought it would bring political recognition to their movement as well as material aid. Despite earlier warnings from José Martí (who had been killed in battle in May, 1895), they thought that the Teller Amendment would protect the island from undue American control, and that the United States would support the new republic.

When Spain relinquished control in 1899, however, a U.S. military government took over the governing of the island. The American overseers began a program that would lead Cuba to independence, but with a number of controls and restrictions. The U.S. administration restored services, taking control of customs, sanitation, and the postal service. In addition, malaria and yellow fever were eliminated on the island, and education and the infrastructure were also improved.

In 1900, municipal elections were held and a constitution drafted. In order to ensure U.S. control, a series of clauses, known as the Platt Amendment, were attached to the draft of that constitution. Among other things, this amendment restricted Cuba's ability to enter into treaties, gave the United States the power to intervene in Cuban affairs, and permitted the United States to purchase or lease land for naval stations. In essence, the United States remained Cuba's legal guardian.

The Platt Amendment also guaranteed the United States the right to lease property "in perpetuity" at Guantánamo Bay for the purpose of building a U.S. naval base.

The Cubans at first refused to sign the constitution, as the Platt Amendment was a humiliation to Cuban sovereignty. However, when signing it became a condition for U.S. withdrawal from the island, the Cubans acquiesced. The constitution was ratified in 1901, and Cuba officially became an independent republic in 1902.

The Republic: 1902–1959

Cuba's years as a republic can be characterized by rampant government corruption, a disregard for the conditions of the poor, a continuation of U.S. involvement in Cuban affairs and a concomitant ongoing disagreement among Cubans about that involvement, and, underlying all, a relatively steady prosperity—thanks to the sugar industry—which allowed, in spite of political instability, some growth in public institutions and services.

The Republic years were characterized by prosperity and governmental corruption.

By all accounts, the early republican governments were dominated by corruption, nepotism, and squabbles over the Platt Amendment and the role of the United States in Cuba's affairs. Nevertheless, the island prospered, and some of that prosperity resulted in public good: Roads, railroads and ports were built or improved, and schools, museums, and hospitals were established. There was a sugar boom during World War I, but then the bottom dropped out of the sugar market in 1920, causing a number of Cuban sugar concerns to go into receivership with U.S. banks. By 1924, American investments in Cuba totaled $1.2 billion: The U.S. owned 50% of the sugar industry, had sizable capital in public utilities, and purchased 75% of Cuban exports. Americans were also enthusiastically visiting Cuba as tourists, especially during the Prohibition years.

Given the dependence of the Cuban economy on the United States, it was inevitable that the 1929 U.S. stock market crash would badly hurt the Cuban economy. Foreign trade dropped drastically, investment stopped, and unemployment rose. Resentment grew against the regime in power, a U.S.-supported government headed by Gerardo Machado y Morales.

In 1933, Sergeant Fulgencio Batista organized a revolt of noncommissioned officers. Student support turned the military revolt into a true revolution. The United States did not intercede, and after some internal struggle Ramón Grau emerged as the revolutionary provisional president, with Batista promoted to colonel and given the position of chief military commander of the Cuban armed forces. Grau remained in office only for a year or so, but during that time he instituted several labor reforms, and denounced the Platt Amendment. Batista forced Grau out of office in 1934, eventually replacing him with Carlos Mendieta, a provisional president whose government the United States immediately recognized.

Mendieta's administration had severe problems, but he signed the Treaty of Relations, which, among other things, abrogated the Platt Amendment, although it allowed the United States to continue renting

the property at Guantánamo Bay for its naval base. During Mendieta's administration, special trade agreements were also made: American exports to Cuba were given preferential treatment, and Cuba was guaranteed 22% of the U.S. sugar market at low tariffs.

Mendieta resigned in December, 1935, and from then until after World War II, Batista dominated Cuban politics from his position as the commander of the Cuban armed forces. In 1940, he was elected president, and his government showed promise both in social welfare measures and economic growth. U.S.-Cuban relations were cordial during the war, and the sugar industry did well.

In 1944, Batista lost the presidential election to Ramón Grau, and went into political retirement in the U.S. He re-emerged before the elections of 1952, however, seizing power in a coup d'etat and establishing a military dictatorship. Batista's government was immediately recognized by non-communist nations throughout the world. Although dissent was at first tolerated, continuing resistance to Batista's rule prompted more and more severe repression. Batista's government also became more and more notorious for its corruption.

Fidel Castro became a folk hero.

Fidel Castro and the Revolution

In July,1953, Fidel Castro, a young dissident who had been active in student politics, led an attack on the Moncada Army Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. Most of the attackers were killed, but Castro was arrested and sentenced to 15 years in prison. He was released in May, 1955, as one of the political prisoners freed by a general amnesty declared by Batista.

Castro went into exile in Mexico, where he organized other Cubans—their group was called the 26th of July Movement after the date of the attack—and planned revolution. The group established contacts with the opposition in Cuba. The Argentinean Ernesto "Che" Guevara joined the movement, and for the next three years the group trained for guerrilla warfare.

In December 1956, fewer than 60 revolutionaries landed in Oriente Province from the yacht *Granma*. This attempt at revolution failed, and Castro, Guevara, and the surviving revolutionaries fled to the Sierra Maestre Mountains. There they continued their guerrilla struggle, organizing support among the population and publicizing their cause abroad.

While Castro was becoming a folk hero, the Batista regime was rapidly losing support. Urban terrorism increased, the middle class became alienated, and the United States cooled in its support of Batista.

The revolution culminated in an attack from the Sierra Maestra in the last days of December, 1988. The Cuban army disintegrated, and on New Year's Day Batista fled Cuba for the Dominican Republic. A week later, on January 8, 1959, Guevara entered Havana.

The Revolutionary Government, 1959–63

The first few years of Cuba's revolutionary government saw the dissolution of the political structures of the old republic, without a firm plan or alternative to replace them except a resolve to end corruption in government, to promote Cuban nationalism, and to meet the needs of the working classes. All power was in the hands of the leaders of the revolution, specifically Fidel Castro, his brother Raul Castro, and Che Guevara. The old institutions were disbanded, and much of the land and material wealth of the country was redistributed. These measures made a strong statement that the revolutionary government had the common people's interests at heart, but they antagonized much of the middle and upper classes.

An early goal of the revolutionary government was to lessen dependence on the sugar crop. The leaders thought that industrial development was the answer, and made plans to expand industry throughout the country. As part of that planning, the First Deputy Premier of the Soviet Union, Anastas Mikoyan, visited Cuba in February, 1960, and signed an agreement in which the Soviet Union would provide a massive amount of industrial equipment and technical assistance, and would in turn buy a significant amount of sugar between then and 1964.

The revolutionary government had the common people's interest at heart, but antagonized much of the upper and middle classes.

In 1960 and 1961, the government nationalized foreign enterprises, offering long term bonds in return. Among the nationalized properties belonging to Americans were 36 large sugar mills, the national phone system, the national electrical system, all oil refineries, and all U.S.-owned banks. The United States retaliated with a trade embargo which is still in effect, and withdrew all aid and technical assistance. This severing of economic ties between Cuba and its largest partner would have been catastrophic to Cuba if the Soviet Union had not been there to absorb much of the sugar crop and to provide imports.

In April, 1961, Castro announced that the revolution was socialist. He subsequently began to shape many of the revolutionary institutions after the Soviet model. In 1961-62, a massive education and literacy campaign was undertaken, reminiscent of such campaigns in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Many resources were poured into the health system, and other social improvements were undertaken.

The American response to the ties developing between Cuba and the Soviet Union was, after Mikoyan's visit to Cuba in February, 1960, a decision to recruit, train and supply a Cuban-American military force. In January, 1961, diplomatic relations were severed. Soon after his inauguration, President Kennedy approved a previously conceived plan to invade Cuba using the Cuban-American military force (but no non-Cuban Americans), and on April 17, that force landed at the Bay of Pigs. Castro's army crushed the invasion in two days and took the surviving Cuban-Americans prisoner. He later ransomed those prisoners for $62 million in needed goods and medical supplies, and the Cuban-Americans were back in the United States in time for Christmas.

Despite the disaster, Kennedy got credit at the time for taking a strong stand against Communism.

The next crisis in U.S.-Cuban relations came a year and a half later. The USSR had persuaded Castro to allow the Soviets to install nuclear missiles on Cuban soil. On learning that missiles and supporting troops were proceeding toward Cuba, the United States announced a naval quarantine of the area until all the missiles were removed. For six days, President Kennedy and Premier Krushchev were nose to nose on the issue, but then Krushchev backed down—or, as Secretary of State Dean Rusk later put it in his account of the crisis, "Krushchev blinked." One of the upshots of the confrontation was a commitment on the American side not to invade Cuba as long as there was no buildup of Soviet nuclear arms. Another result of the confrontation was a noticeable souring of Cuban-Soviet relations and the strengthening of the relationship between Cuba and communist China.

The Cuban Missile Crisis had Kennedy and Krushchev nose to nose.

Besides the U.S. reaction, the response of other countries in Latin America to the Cuban revolutionary government and its Soviet links was not favorable, largely because Cuba insisted on "exporting the revolution" by providing support to dissident groups. In January, 1962, the Organization of American States voted to exclude Cuba after Venezuela had provided evidence of Cuban support for Venezuelan insurgents. There were other incidents, and ultimately all the OAS states except Mexico severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. (There is still animosity toward Mexico among the Cuban-American population as a result of Mexico's action.)

The Mid-1960s

During the middle and late 1960s, the revolutionary government debated and experimented with different forms of socialism. The central question was: Should Cuba tend to the Soviet model, which emphasized central planning and the motivation of workers through rewards for meeting the centrally planned goals? Or should it tend to the Chinese model, which emphasized education and training to develop workers whose motivation to work for the state was based on heightened consciences? The *fidelistas*, those faithful to Fidel Castro, debated with the *guevaristas*, those who approved of Che Guevara's essentially Maoist approach, and both groups banded together to debate with the old-line communists who favored quotas and material incentives. Part of the social experimentation involved a strong campaign against bureaucrats and private property; at one point, small businesses were nationalized, despite the fact that as private enterprises they were contributing significantly to the economy.

During these debates, economic problems led to a very negative balance of trade. The only solution appeared to lie in the sugar industry, and the entire society subsequently engaged in an all-out effort to meet a 1970 production goal of 10 million tons of sugar. This was an unrealistic goal to begin with—the highest level of production Cuba

had ever attained was 7.2 million tons in 1952, and the norm in the 1960s was between 4 and 5 million tons per year—but Cuba nevertheless managed to produce 8.5 million tons in 1970.

Those 8.5 million tons were not produced, however, without damage to other areas of the economy, and to Castro's reputation. His authoritarian attitudes had already caused some criticism of his personal style and a lessening of popular support. Now, Cuba's failure to produce those 10 million tons cast doubt on the overall effectiveness of the regime.

In the meantime, Cuba was beginning to assume a leadership role among Third World countries. In 1979, Cuba hosted the summit conference of nonaligned nations, and chaired that conference between 1979 and 1982.

The 1970s

In the 1970s, Cuba strengthened its ties with the Soviet Union.

In response to the failure of 1970 and worsening overall conditions, Castro moved toward a somewhat more pragmatic stance. He focused on improving the economy and increasing participation of the masses. Moral incentives were de-emphasized and more practical central planning encouraged. The population was mobilized through membership in various government-controlled mass organizations.

For economic support, Cuba moved closer to the Soviet Bloc, strengthening its ties with both the USSR and the Eastern bloc nations. Relations with various states in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean were repaired or strengthened. Resulting preferential trade agreements boosted the Cuban economy; economic conditions improved and shortages decreased. Cuba also benefited from the exchange of military, commercial, and technical assistance between itself and the Soviet Union.

A new constitution, based on the 1936 Soviet constitution, devolved more authority to local government than before. This new constitution laid out and legitimized a governmental structure which included more local government than before, but in fact real power stayed in the hands of the Communist Party of Cuba, which was in Castro's hands. Elections were held and the constitution was signed in 1976, and thereafter the political situation in Cuba stabilized.

Cuba continued to gain respect among the nonaligned nations, and with Soviet military support began to play a part in assisting revolutionary activities in other countries. Cuban involvement in Somalia and in Angola was particularly troublesome to the United States

Relations between Cuba and the United States improved marginally during the later 1970s, but there was still U.S. distrust for the strengthened ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union. The trade embargo was slightly relaxed in 1975, foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies were allowed to begin trading with Cuba, and there were exchanges of visitors and delegations between the countries. When Jimmy Carter became president in 1977, it was thought on all sides that

the United States might normalize relations, but the Cuban community in Miami applied pressure in various ways, and normalization did not occur. Then, in 1979, the existence of a brigade of Soviet soldiers in Cuba came to light, and Carter accused Cuba of breaking the terms of the 1962 agreement. Tensions built until the Soviet Union assured the United States that its troops in Cuba had neither the intention nor the capability of invading American territory.

Internally, this was a continued period of transition in Cuba, as the revolutionary government made a concerted effort to change the socio-economic system and to instill values to support these changes. The education system continued to be geared toward building socialist values. For example, young children who were put into day care centers so that their parents could work were taught from an early age the importance of good character, peer group goals and identity, and especially loyalty to the revolution.

Castro opened the Mariel port.

The 1980s

This decade started out with a bombshell for the United States: the Mariel boatlift. In April, 1980, a group of six Cuban dissenters drove to the Peruvian Embassy in Havana with the purpose of seeking asylum; when the bus they had commandeered headed for the embassy gates and accelerated, the Cubans officially guarding the embassy opened fire on the bus, and a ricocheting bullet hit and killed one of the guards. The Peruvians refused to turn the dissenters over to the Cuban authorities, whereupon several thousand Cubans descended on the embassy. Castro responded by opening up the Mariel port, west of Havana, relaxing restrictions on emigration to the point that many felt free to leave, and "deporting," as we mentioned earlier, a sizable number of people he felt were undesirable. (It is reported that one of the reasons Castro opened the Mariel port was his irritation at Jimmy Carter's criticism of the Cuban government's restrictive policy toward emigration.) Soon 120,000 undocumented Cubans arrived in Florida, placing tremendous strain on U.S. facilities. It wasn't until four years later, in 1984, that Cuba and the U.S. discussed the issue: As a result of these discussions, some of the Mariel entrants were returned to Cuba, and both countries agreed that a ceiling number—or quota—of 20,000 Cubans would be allowed to emigrate legally to the United States each year. This marked the first time that an immigration agreement was struck between the countries.

The 1985 establishment of Radio Martí—a U.S. government-sponsored radio station, separate from the Voice of America, broadcasting into Cuba—further strained U.S.–Cuba relations. Castro immediately suspended the immigration agreement, and announced that Cuban-Americans would no longer be allowed to visit Cuba. The United States responded by barring any Cubans from visiting the United States. There were other demonstrations of ill will on both sides, but in 1987 the two countries restored the immigration agreement, and met to discuss the

war in Angola. (Castro's support for the Marxist government in Angola had been a thorn in the U.S.'s side for some time.)

The late 1980s brought remarkable changes—*glasnost* and *perestroika*—to the Soviet Union. Castro declared that Cuba would remain a socialist state and would not institute the kinds of changes going on in the Soviet Union, thereby loosening somewhat the ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union. The government also engaged in some experimentation with economic liberalism, mostly along the lines of peasant markets in which farmers were allowed to sell their produce directly to consumers.

At the same time, there was much discussion in the United States about normalizing relations with Cuba. As the fear of communism lessened, so did one of the rationales for trying to isolate Cuba.

The 1990s

The Cuban economy shrank drastically with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Since 1961, the Soviet Union had bought the major portion of the Cuban sugar crop, usually at prices favorable to Cuba. In addition, Soviet aid to Cuba amounted to several billions of dollars annually. When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, so did the preferential trade agreements and technical support to Cuba. Moreover, the new Russian anxiety to obtain aid from the United States, coupled with an intensification of anti-Castro sentiment in the United States as President Bush continued Reagan's hard-line stand, worked together to worsen the situation in Cuba. In 1992, the United States tightened the economic embargo by forbidding foreign subsidiaries of American companies to trade with Cuba, and in 1993 Russia withdrew 3,000 troops from Cuba.

All this had a predictably devastating effect on the Cuban economy, which is estimated to have shrunk by as much as one third to one half since 1991. Castro announced a "special period in peacetime" to address the situation, and introduced stricter food rationing, energy conservation, a reduction in public services, and a call to the people to rededicate themselves to the principles of the revolution. In additional attempts to bolster the economy, the government passed laws to legalize possession of dollars, allowed foreign investment in state-controlled enterprises, and allowed foreigners to own property in joint ventures. Barriers to tourism were also lifted, to improve the flow of hard currency.

Even with these measures, the shortages worsened, and discontent grew in proportion to the scarcity of electrical power, gasoline, and food. Life was especially difficult for young Cubans, who had no personal knowledge of the time before the revolution and therefore had nothing to compare the current hardships with. Although most Cubans in Cuba continued publicly to support their government, there was a growing desire for a free and public debate on the country's future, and for more personal freedoms including the right to travel.

As frustration increased, a growing number of Cubans decided to leave: Three times over a period of two weeks in the summer of 1994,

ferries crossing the Bay of Havana were hijacked in attempts to leave Cuba.

Castro's response was similar to the response that led to the Mariel boatlift: He made it easier for the discontents to leave. Many parts of the Cuban coast were no longer patrolled, and thousands began to build rafts and boats out of any available material: inner tubes, old tires, styrofoam. They then set out for Florida, confident that they would be found and admitted to the United States. About 35,000 Cubans attempted to enter the United States in this manner.

For the first time in history, however, the U.S. administration refused entrance: Attorney General Janet Reno, using her discretionary powers (and, in the opinion of some, exceeding her authority), announced that those who entered without documents would be detained indefinitely at Guantánamo Bay Naval Station. The rafters continued to take to the sea, to be picked up by U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships and carried around the island to Guantánamo.

For the first time in history, the administration refused to allow Cubans to enter the U.S.

After several days of negotiations in September, an agreement was reached whereby Castro would stop the departure of boats and rafts, and the U.S. quota of 20,000 Cuban immigrants per year would be reinstated. Cubans wishing to immigrate would be required to apply at the U.S. Interests Section office in Havana, and those interned at Guantánamo would have to return to Havana to apply and wait.

The Administration subsequently reversed itself on the issue of the Cubans at Guantánamo. In May, 1995, the Attorney General announced that all Cubans at Guantánamo would be allowed to enter the United States except those with criminal histories. This decision was linked to a new agreement with Cuba that calls for the United States to interdict all future rafters and return them to Cuba after an interview to determine whether they are in genuine need of protection. Those returned to Cuba are told that they can apply for refugee status through the U.S. interests section in Havana. As of March, 30,983 Cubans who were taken to Guantánamo have entered the United States as parolees. The quota of 20,000 immigrant visas have been granted, and many of the visa holders have also arrived.

The Cuban Education System

There is general agreement that the level of Cuban education is very high, but sources disagree as to why: Those favorable to the Castro government claim that it is the result of the emphasis placed on education since the revolution, while anti-Castro sources assert that the level of education in Cuba has always been high.

During the Spanish colonial days, there was almost no education available in the rural areas where the peasants and slaves lived, although the urban Spanish population had access to education for its children. During the U.S. occupation of Cuba, plans were laid out—and implemented to an impressive extent—to provide education for all children on the island. Whereas in 1899, only 16% of the school-age

population was registered in school, that figure had risen to 40% in 1902, and that 40% was relatively evenly distributed among the provinces.

These impressive gains were not sustained during the years of the republic. Although the overall literacy rate reached 72% by 1931, it never went higher than that. School enrollment rates did not go over 60%, and a much higher percentage of urban children attended school than did rural children. The dropout rate after elementary school was high, especially in the rural areas.

As we mentioned before, one of the immediate objectives of the revolutionary government was to improve the educational system, partially as a medium for the creation of a new culture, but also for the sake of improving the educational level of the populace as a goal in itself. 1961 was declared the Year of Education, and a remarkably effective campaign of adult education was launched. Almost 300,000 children and adults were sent out into the countryside to teach under the slogan, "If you know, teach; if you don't know, learn." By 1979, the literacy rate in Cuba was higher than 90%, comparable to the rates in the United States and other developed countries.

"If you know, teach; if you don't know, learn."

Exactly what that figure means is a point of contention. Not all figures from the Cuban government can be believed, and in any country the literacy rate is as much a reflection of the definition of literacy used as it is of the number of people who can read. It is clear, however, that almost everyone in Cuba has gone to school, and the existence of well over a thousand libraries on the island attests to the fact that the population is in general a reading one.

Structure of the Education System

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Cuban government revamped the school system, abandoning the Soviet model for a more Western one that is difficult to find information on. The recent Cuban entrants went to school primarily under the old system, however, and so we will describe it here.

In general, the system was characterized by attention to the "correct line," rigid curricula and teaching styles, and the development of model socialist citizens. Classes were mostly in lecture format, with minimal teacher-student interaction. Students were encouraged to memorize, and discouraged from asking questions and thinking independently. Schools incorporated education into community life by stressing group play, requiring students to care for the school grounds and farms, teaching vocational skills, and focusing on the development of a politically and morally "correct" background on the part of each student.

Education was compulsory for six years. After that, students up to age 16 were required to continue their education at the secondary level or to join the Youth Movement, which combined study with vocational training and service.

The school year ran from September to June, for a total of 40 weeks

per year. All schools were under the control of the Ministry of Education, and were uniform in curriculum and scheduling throughout the island. Students passed from one grade to the next via national examinations, and their contributions to and attitudes toward socialism were taken into account when they applied for higher-level schooling. There was a uniquely Cuban emphasis on the combination of education and service: Even the littlest children were required to help keep their school clean and tend its gardens, and many of the older ones attended boarding schools during the week where they spent half a day in classes and half a day at work on farms.

The primary level was grades 1 through 6, and was compulsory and identical for all children. They started at age 6 and attended classes 6½ hours a day; they studied basic literacy skills and composition in Spanish, basic arithmetic, and ideological orientation.

Cuban education combined education and community service.

The secondary level was grades 7 through 9, 10, or 11, and a student could choose (or have chosen for him) one of three tracks: general secondary, teacher training, or vocational training. All tracks provided instruction in Spanish, mathematics, the sciences, history, and technical/agricultural production. In the general secondary schools there were 26 hours of instruction per week, in 9 or 10 subject areas, with no electives. Students could go on to higher secondary schools for an additional three or four years of education, so a number of Cubans who finished higher secondary school will have had as much as 15 years of pre-college education.

There are four universities in Cuba: La Habana, Las Villas, Camagüey, and Oriente. A successful university candidate would have completed high school, passed an entrance test, gone through a personal interview, and shown concrete evidence of a correct revolutionary attitude.

English

One of the more interesting aspects of the current problems in Cuba is the emergence of English and its inclusion as a compulsory subject in the education system. It is probably no surprise that English language training has not been a high priority for the revolutionary government. However, the re-emergence of tourism as a source of hard currency has made the ability to speak English more valuable. As it is in the newly independent countries of the ex-Soviet Union, English is now the foreign language of choice, officially acknowledged as the language of entry into the international community. The Ministry of Education has made the study of English compulsory in secondary schools, and several government programs in English have been established for adults.

There is a teacher-training program in English available in all the pedagogical institutes. This program requires the student to spend five years studying grammar, general linguistics, literature, and area studies of the English-speaking countries. The program is remarkably success-

ful considering Cuba's lack of resources—Knowledgeable Americans have commented that these programs are current on recent developments in the field of English language teaching—but not surprising, considering that Cuba has always maintained normal contacts with English-speaking Great Britain and Canada, and quiet contacts with the United States.

A great problem with English teachers at the moment appears to be their abandonment of the profession in favor of the tourism industry. Cubans who deal with tourists have access to hard currency in the form of tips, and this access is enough to make a low-level job at a hotel more lucrative than a more prestigious one as a teacher.

The Cuban Health System

The Cuban health system is a formidable achievement by many accounts.

The health care system has been severely affected by Cuba's last several years of economic difficulties and the American embargo, but even so is by many accounts a formidable achievement, and is frequently cited by Castro, along with the education system, as evidence of the success of his revolutionary government.

Health care for every citizen has been a top priority, second only to education. Clinics and health care providers are located throughout the country even in rural areas, and care is free. The system emphasizes prevention, health education, and community medicine. Each individual is expected to fulfill certain well-defined requirements for his own health care, like getting an annual check-up, and these expectations are clearly communicated through health education and are reinforced by popular support. Maintaining one's health is seen as one of the characteristics of a good revolutionary citizen.

The health care system has resulted in a national health profile unparalleled in the third world, and its comprehensiveness is reflected in vital statistics. Cuba's life expectancy rates and other such indications are equal to those in developed countries: Life expectancy among men is 74 years, among women 77 years; infant mortality rates are about 12 per 1,000 births. These excellent rates might have slipped some, given the drastic shortages of medical supplies since 1991, but overall the Cuban population is healthy and long-lived, especially in comparison to the populations of other Caribbean and Latin American countries.

There are negative aspects to the Cuban health care system, one of which—the severe restriction of personal freedom—is described below in our discussion of the Cuban approach to HIV-positive individuals. And like the health system in the Soviet Union, the best medical care has been available only to those in high government positions, or to those who can pay for it with hard currency.

Political, Religious, and Family Life

For 30 years, Cuba's revolutionary government made strides in reducing economic inequality and in providing for the minimal needs of all Cubans, through its single-minded commitment to the goals of the revolution and its centralized control of social and political institutions. An important underlying factor in this success was undoubtedly economic: Until recently the government has had a sympathetic market for its exports as well as economic and technical support and has therefore had the means to develop its highly vaunted social services. It must also be remembered that this success has been achieved through the suppression of dissent and the curbing of political and civil liberties.

Since 1991, there has been no sympathetic external market; the Cuban economy has faltered drastically, and the social benefits that Cubans enjoyed can no longer be provided as they have been. In such a climate, the right to dissent—to have one's voice at least heard in complaint, if not in working toward solutions to social and economic problems—becomes crucial. The government's suppression of dissent and emphasis on control, conformity and centralization is blocking initiative and innovation which could help address the country's problems. Many Cubans feel that the only solution to their distress is to leave.

A successful economy provided support for Cuba's social services.

Centralization of Power

The real power in Cuba is extremely centralized in Castro and the top party leadership. This centralization at the top is carried through all levels of organization down to the local level; only at the lower community levels are there possibilities for democratic participation. Many analysts feel that this extreme centralization of the political structure has interfered with the system's ability to increase the production of goods and services.

Censorship

There is no independent press or right to independent assembly. Cubans are not able to debate issues publicly. The Cuban government believes that independent political groups are counter-productive in a society that is still "consolidating" the revolution. There is considerable censorship not only of American publications, but also of Soviet and Eastern European publications.

All the media are controlled by the government. There are three major national newspapers: *Granma* published by the Communist party, *Juventud Rebelde* published by the Communist Youth, and *Trabajadores*, published by the Cuban Federation of Workers. The two national television stations, several national radio networks, and one international network are all administered by the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television.

Religion

Cuba is traditionally a Catholic country, but its Catholicism is much modified and influenced. A much stronger religious force is *Santería*, a cult that originated in Cuba and spread to neighboring islands (and to the United States: Dead chickens have been found in the Miami River).

Santeria developed out of the traditions of the Yoruba, one of the African peoples who were imported to Cuba during the 16th through 19th centuries to work on the sugar plantations. Santeria blends elements of Christianity and West African beliefs and as such made it possible for the slaves to retain their traditional beliefs while appearing to practice Catholicism. Santerians believe in one God, but also in saints or spirits known as *orishas*: To a Santerian, for example, St. Peter is Oggun, the Yoruba *orisha* patron of miners and workers. These *orishas* are believed to be able to intervene on one's behalf as Catholic saints can. Santerians also believe that ritual devotions involving musical rhythms, offerings of food and animal sacrifice, divination with fetishes made of bones or shells, trancelike seizures, and other rites can reveal the sources of day-to-day problems and suggest solutions to them.

It is difficult to practice religion openly and be successful in Cuban society.

The Cuban government has been formally supportive of organized religion—religious freedom is guaranteed in the 1976 constitution—but in practice, it is very difficult to practice one's religion openly and succeed in Cuban society. Until very recently, for example, higher education was not accessible to young people who openly professed a religion (we mentioned above that admission is based partly on the upright socialist nature of one's character, and it is apparently difficult to be religious and socialist at the same time).

Family Life

Equality of the sexes is the official socialist ideal, although sexism is still prevalent, and women still do most of the domestic work. The Family Code of 1974 established the official goal of equal participation in the home, but in fact, these habits and values have changed very slowly. Publicly, a man is considered the head of household although within the home, the woman usually has control.

One very important aspect of sexual equality *has* been dealt with: To a great extent, girls participate equally in the education system described above. Perhaps as a result of this education, more Cuban women publicly stand up for their rights than one might expect.

While the extended family remains strong in terms of housing—extended families often live together, partly because of the housing shortage—the traditional Hispanic family pattern in which children are almost totally cared for by parents or grandparents has been substantially replaced by a reliance on day care centers and other public institutions. The community (neighborhood, church, school and production cooperative) also serves as something of an extended family, helping to reinforce social values and emotional security.

The government provides day care both as a means of freeing women up to work, and also as a way to start education in socialist values early. At first there were both alternative and mainstream centers: The alternative centers (based on the Swedish model) emphasized free play, inter-age groupings, flexibility, and exploration, and the mainstream centers focused on cleanliness, structured learning, achievement, and fixed schedules. In 1971, all programs were centralized and only the mainstream approach was continued. Centers emphasize group play, and children are overtly taught that they should be part of a group. One observer has found that day care centers try to break down sexist attitudes: Boys play with dolls or pretend to be nurses, while girls pretend to be the household providers or doctors.

Cuban Music, Dance, and Art

Cuban music is distinctive.

The revolutionary government of Cuba officially recognizes that cultural activity is essential to the fulfillment of its economic and social goals, and has accordingly been very supportive of Cuban art, music, and literature, including the promotion of appreciation of the African elements in Cuban culture. All areas of Cuban culture are protected and promoted by the Ministry of Culture established in 1976.

Cuban music is a distinctive combination of Spanish and African elements: The rumba, guaracha, bolero, conga, and cha-cha are among Cuban rhythms enjoyed by listeners and dancers all over the world. The habanera that most of us can hum from Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen* is a Cuban dance rhythm. The National Folklore Group of Cuba is the foremost performing group of Cuban dances, and represents the country among the international set of folk dance troupes that perform throughout the world. Cuban interest in ballet predates the revolution: The world-famous Cuban dancer Alicia Alonso founded Ballet Alicia Alonso in 1948.

Of special interest are the singers Silvio Rodriguez and Pablo Milanes, who started a musical movement called *La nueva trova*, politically and socially conscious songs that comment on the new Cuban man and woman. These songs are somewhat in the spirit of the American '60s singers like Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez, and can be heard all over Latin America and Spain.

There is a national Cuban literature, in Spanish, that had its origins in 19th-century Cuban writers' commitment to Cuban independence from Spain. José Martí, who is discussed above in more detail, was the foremost of these writers.

Cuban filmmakers have earned respect in international cinematographic circles and are particularly adept at capturing varied facets of social problems within a narrative or anecdotal framework. One film in particular—*Fresa y chocolate* (*Strawberries and Chocolate*)—has gained a great deal of international attention, not only for its quality (*Variety* reviewed it as "an international breakthrough film for Cuban cinema, thanks to its great good humor and wit"), but also its subject

matter. It portrays the friendship between two young men, one of them a dedicated socialist homophobe and the other a *loca* (overt homosexual) in the days before the Mariel boatlift. The film has been wildly popular in Cuba and won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in February, 1995.

Cuban posters are perhaps the best and most popular example of Cuban art, and form one of the country's national exports. Other Cuban art can be seen and enjoyed in over two hundred museums on the island.

Several sources mention that the drastic economic situation in Cuba has caused a good many Cuban artists, musicians, writers, and others in the cultural milieu to leave the country.

Cuban Values and American Values

The revolution promulgated socialist, nationalistic, anti-American values.

Service providers are well aware that the source of many resettlement problems is the difference between values the refugees and immigrants bring with them, and values held by the U.S. communities they are resettling into. Cuban refugees are no exception.

The revolution brought about major social changes in almost every aspect of Cuban life, often explicitly intending to change values. Further, the revolution promulgated a socialist, nationalistic, and anti-American society so that many revolutionary values are the "mirror image" of our values. And because of the political conflict between the two countries, there has been little interchange to mitigate against extreme stereotypes on both sides. Any Cuban entrant to the United States under 45 years of age has spent most of his life in a country with an authoritarian, socialist, anti-American government. Even those coming to this country seeking personal and political freedoms will find the difference in values jarring. Although difficult for adults, the acculturation process may be most difficult for adolescents who may not have chosen to come to the US but were brought by their parents.

Cubans as Hispanics

Cubans are Hispanics, of course, and 40 years of socialism have not completely erased the traditional Hispanic values that Cubans have always held. In fact, there is evidence that the Cuban brand of socialism has been tailored somewhat to complement, or at least not to confront directly, the traditional values. Cuban "Hispanicness," however, has always been tempered by influences from its Black community, and many of these influences have been given pride of place by the socialist government in fulfillment of its aim to equalize the citizenry of Cuba. In short, Cubans can not, and should not, be thought of as another group of undifferentiated Hispanics. There are differences within any national Hispanic group, and significant differences between any two Hispanic groups; and Cubans, by virtue of their history and the social system they have lived in, are significantly different from all.

Rights vs. Benefits

In essence, the United States and socialist Cuba are extreme opposites in their beliefs as to what constitutes social and political rights for its citizens. Americans have been taught from childhood that we all have the right to dissent, to vote for change, and to organize politically. We do not consider social benefits as rights; we feel instead that such things as medical care, jobs, housing, and higher education are benefits to be earned through work. Cubans, conversely, see medical care, guaranteed employment, housing, and education as basic rights, but have been taught that control over society is required to provide these rights.

An excellent example of the differences in value systems is a comparison of the treatment of HIV-positive individuals in the United States and in Cuba. In tandem with a mandatory testing program, Cuba, alone among the countries of the world, quarantines all HIV-positive individuals, hospitalizing those with active symptoms and isolating nearly all those who are symptom-free. These latter individuals are required to live in special compounds, apart from their families; most cannot continue practicing their occupations, but are supported by the state. This permanent and obligatory quarantine is "for the common good," and those who oppose the quarantine practice are seen as "enemies of the Revolution."

The U.S. and Cuba have diametrically opposed beliefs as to what constitutes human rights.

Americans respond to both the mandatory testing and the quarantining as unthinkable violations of human rights, but in Cuba the practice is defended as necessary to protect the rights of the majority of the population. (Cuba's AIDS rate, 0.8 reported cases per 100,000 people, is one of the lowest in Latin America and the Caribbean.) A Cuban physician who has been quarantined for years asks which is ultimately more humane: to identify exposed individuals and to provide them with comfortable living arrangements and the best medical care available as in Cuba, or to leave them to fend for themselves, as in the United States and other countries.

Socioeconomic Values

Cuban values stress collective wealth and collective political awareness. People who have lived in the Cuban social system may be struck negatively by the materialism, winner-take-all capitalism, individualism, competition, crime, and racism of the United States. It may be difficult for them to see positive aspects of American culture, and their negative view may be amplified by their economic situation: They may be living in poor areas, going to poorer schools, and at the same time being bombarded by advertising and an unbelievable array of consumer goods.

Concept of Self

Socialist notions of interdependence, brotherhood, and loyalty to one's peer group are strongly valued in Cuba and do not differ markedly from the concept of self identified by several writers as a traditional Hispanic

value. These values stand in sharp contrast to the independence, impersonal relations, and individualism of the United States.

Goals

Some Cuban newcomers may be present-oriented and hard to motivate to achieve long-term goals, yet many are highly resourceful and perhaps even manipulative. This contrast may reflect the contrast in Cuba between the official socialist system and the unofficial, who-you-know method of getting things done (called *sociolismo*, from the term *socio*, 'buddy').

Resettlement Problems

As can be seen in the discussion above, there are several crucial areas where Cuban revolutionary values clash with American values, and when they do the Cuban newcomer is probably going to feel confused, or negative, or both. Young adult and adolescent Cuban newcomers, in particular, have been shaped by the educational system described above, and have little or no contact with or understanding of other societies. They are the ones most susceptible to the clash in values, especially if the decision to immigrate was not theirs to make.

Emigration often entails the severing of cherished family relationships.

One very important aspect of emigration to many Cubans is the response of the family members remaining in Cuba. Often, these family members are bitterly opposed to the emigrants' leaving. As a result, emigration often entails, besides the expected hardships, the severing of cherished family relationships. Service providers should be alert to such possibilities.

Service providers in the northwest report that their Cuban clients often have unrealistically high expectations when they arrive—they expect, for example, to be established in their own homes and jobs immediately on arrival—and show impatience with the gradual nature of resettlement.

Bureaucracy

The U.S. bureaucracy presents a formidable challenge to Cubans accustomed to having their needs routinely met by socialist systems. Made up of numerous programs and agencies, each with different eligibility requirements, the bureaucracy here places heavy responsibility on the individual to identify and seek out appropriate services. If Americans who have perfect command of English and who have grown up within the system have difficulties negotiating it, it is no surprise that Cuban newcomers find it impenetrable.

Support Systems

While Cuban newcomers in the 1960s preferred to organize themselves in to extended family support systems, more recent newcomers might feel more comfortable with block and community-level support systems.

Education

Cubans in general have been found to be more trusting of schools than other Hispanic immigrant groups, and they will endure hardship, prejudice, and language barriers to achieve academic success. Studies have shown, for example, that Cubans are more likely to complete high school than other Hispanic immigrant groups.

Cuban children's problems with the U.S. school system have been described in detail in the book, *The Children of Mariel: Cuban Refugee Children in South Florida Schools*, by Helga Silva. (See the bibliography for further information on this study and those described below.) She studied the experience of schools following the influx of 11,000 new Cuban-American students in six months from the Mariel boatlift, and many of her findings are relevant to today's entrants. Among the findings of this study is the need for more counseling, especially bilingual counseling at the high school level. One educator pointed out the need to continue to monitor the children for an extended period: Subtle, but chronic, emotional problems and anti-social behavior often take a year or more to detect. Another educator added that the schools could make better use of community mental health agencies in helping the children.

Cubans will endure hardships to achieve academic success.

Another insightful study that points up potential difficulties in school was conducted by Lisa Grafton, who followed the adjustment of "Roberto," a Cuban 10th grader, over a period of a year following his arrival in March of 1991. Roberto's conversations were filled with allusions to danger, death, drugs, and alcohol in the United States. It was difficult for him to see cultural traits as simply different, and he struggled to find a balance while labeling each trait as inferior or superior. Roberto described Cuba as less dangerous, a place where people help one other. He and other Cuban-American students described the American students as cold and uninterested in them. His negative experiences with American students had contributed to a bias on his part toward forming relationships with them. Most of his support came from other immigrant students and his ESOL teacher. One year after arriving, Roberto still felt strongly connected to his native culture, but he had begun to appreciate the opportunities in his new country and showed willingness to acculturate.

Health Care

As we mentioned above, the complex American health care system reflects the values of individual responsibility (for one's own health care), competition (among health care providers), the centrality of work (for insurance), and the belief that the poor should be served by separate, safety-net programs. The Cuban newcomer, accustomed to having all his health care needs taken care of via a simple, centralized system, will be doubly daunted by our system, and will need extra help in taking advantage of it.

In treating Cuban patients in the United States, health care provid-

ers should guard against assuming that they express feelings and reactions in the same way that U.S.-born patients do. For example, Anglo-Americans, in general, are taught to be stoic and not to cry out in pain unless the discomfort is extreme, and to do otherwise is considered self-indulgent or childish. But many Hispanic women are taught that the proper way to handle the pain of childbirth is to let it out vocally. Anglo health care providers may assume she is in great pain or is being self-indulgent. Another example is found in decision-making by women concerning their health care: Anglo providers may become impatient with Hispanic women who delegate the decisions to their husbands.

Cuban Spanish

Cuban Spanish has special characteristics.

The official and national language of Cuba is Spanish, which virtually all of the population speaks. Cuban Spanish is close to Puerto Rican Spanish and the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic, but has special characteristics which make it easily identifiable. In addition, there are internal differences: The Spanish spoken in Havana in the northwest is noticeably different from the Spanish spoken in Santiago in the east. There is also a difference (as there is in any language) between formal and informal Cuban Spanish: In formal Spanish, for example, the *s*'s in the phrase *Hasta la vista* ('So long') are pronounced, but in informal Cuban Spanish, those *s*'s are likely not to be pronounced.

The relationship between formal written Spanish and educated spoken Spanish is parallel to the same relationship in American English. In both Spanish and English there is a recognized "correct" way to spell and punctuate. Pronunciation, however, can vary considerably and still be considered "correct": Consider the differences in spoken English among the recent American presidents. So while there is a single written Spanish that all Spanish speakers recognize as correct, "correct" spoken Spanish can vary widely: The pronunciation of an educated Cuban is no more or less "correct" than the pronunciation of an educated Spaniard or Colombian or any other educated native speaker of Spanish.

Cuban Spanish differs from other dialects of Spanish mostly in pronunciation. Below, we have listed each of the letters of the alphabet (with a couple of additions) and then described its Cuban pronunciation. Note that all Spanish spellings are in italics (e.g., *b*), and all sounds are represented in square brackets (e.g., [b]).

Letter	*Sound*
a	[a] as in English *song*.
b	[b] or [v] or [w]. Does not occur at the ends of words.
c	Like English, it is pronounced [s] before *i* and *e*, (*centavo, hacienda*) and [k] before *a*, *o*, or *u* (*Cuba, Castro*)
ch	[ch] as in *chin*. Does not occur at the ends of words.

d	[d] or [th] as in English *either*. Does not occur at the ends of words.
e	[e] as in English *bed*.
f	[f]. Some Cubans will pronounce *f* as [h], or drop it entirely, at the ends of syllables or words.
g	[g] or [gh] (a sound which doesn't occur in English). Does not occur at the ends of words.
h	[h]. Sometimes written *h* is not pronounced.
i	[i] as in English *read*.
j	a sound like a strong [h] that does not occur in English. It's like the [ch] in German *ach* or *dich*.
k	[k]. Does not occur at the ends of words, and is pronounced slightly differently from English [k] (it might sometimes sound like [g]).
l	[l].
m	[m]. Some Cubans will pronounce *m* as [ng] (as in English *sing*) before another consonant or at the end of a word.
n	[n]. Some Cubans will pronounce *n* as [ng] (as in English *sing*) before another consonant or at the end of a word.
ñ	[ny] as in English *canyon*.
o	[o] as in English *boat*.
p	[p]. Does not occur at the ends of words, and is pronounced slightly differently from English [p](it might sometimes sound like [b]).
q	[k].
r	exactly the sound in American English *ladder*, technically called a 'flap r'. Some Cubans pronounce *r* as [l] before another consonant or at the end of a word.
rr	a trilled sound. Ask a Cuban to pronounce a double *r* for you, and you will recognize it immediately.
s	[s]. Some Cubans will pronounce *s* as [h], or drop it entirely, before another consonant or at the end of a word.
t	[t]. Does not occur at the ends of words, and is pronounced with the tip of the tongue touching the front teeth, rather than the ridge behind it where English [t] is pronounced. It might sometimes sound like [d].
u	[u] as in English *boot*.
v	[v] or [w].
w	[w].
x	[ks].

Some Cubans will pronounce s as [h], or drop it entirely, before a consonant or at the end of a word.

y	[y], or [j] as in English *judge*, or [zh] as in English *pleasure*.
z	[z].

To get the flavor of Cuban pronunciation, find a Spanish text, and read along as a Cuban friend reads it out loud. You will quickly pick up on some of the features we have described above.

Problems in Learning English

Pronunciation and Spelling

English pronunciation is likely to give Cubans particular problems, in particular hearing the differences between consonants at the ends of words, and pronouncing these as well. Other consonant problems will be English [r], which is often difficult for Spanish speakers to hear, the *th* sounds at the beginning of English words, the distinction between [b], [v] and [w], and the distinction between [y] and [j] This latter is particularly important for your Cubans to master, as pronouncing a *y* as [j] carries negative social value.

Cubans will be baffled by English spelling.

English vowels will be a problem because English has so many more vowels than Spanish. Cubans will have difficulty hearing and pronouncing the difference between *bit* and *beet*, *bait* and *bet*, *bet* and *bat*, *would* and *wooed*.

The Spanish spelling system is a much more "phonetic" spelling system (i.e., words are spelled pretty much as they are pronounced) than English, and Cubans will be correspondingly baffled by the apparently crazy way that English words are spelled.

Grammar

Cubans have most of the same problems learning English grammatical structures as other Spanish speakers do, and there are a number of sources that you can read to help you with them (see the Bibliography). Most of these are problems that all learners of English find problematic, for example the use of the auxiliary verb *do* in English questions and negatives, and so they are amply treated in ESL textbooks.

A comparison of some simple sentences in Spanish and English is interesting, as it shows clearly why problems exist. Comparing the following, for example,

Yo quiero ir.	I want to go.
Yo no quiero ir.	I don't want to go.
Mi amigo es cubano.	My friend is Cuban.
Mi amigo no es cubano.	My friend isn't Cuban.
Puedo hablar inglés.	I can speak English.
No puedo hablar inglés.	I can't speak English.

shows that in Spanish, a sentence is made negative by simply inserting the word *no* before the verb, whereas in English, negatives are formed in much more complicated ways. The same is true of questions:

Juan habla inglés.	John speaks English.
¿Habla Juan inglés? or *¿Juan hable inglés?*	Does John speak English?
Es grande.	It's big.
¿Es grande?	Is it big?

A look at parallel sentences also shows why Spanish speakers have trouble with English personal pronouns like *I*, *you*, or *it*:

Yo hablo inglés. or *Hablo inglés.*	I speak English.
Llueve.	It's raining.
Compré un libro ayer.	I bought a book yesterday.
Lo compré ayer.	I bought it yesterday.

Another area of difficulty for Spanish speakers are the English articles *a*, *an*, and *the*. Spanish has parallel articles, but they are used in different ways from the English articles.

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A short (8-page) pamphlet giving basic information about Cuba. Has an excellent map, and contains information of interest and relevance to State Department officials. These pamphlets are updated on a regular basis; the latest can be ordered by calling (202) 647-9272 or (202) 647-9273.

National Geographic

Your public library very probably has an extensive run of *National Geographics*, and an afternoon reading the articles on Cuba will give you a fairly complete picture of events and changes there from a mainstream American point of view. The larger articles on Cuba over the last 75 years:

1992

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1991

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The author's account of his three-month stay and travels in revolutionary Cuba, with descriptions of day-to-day life and a report and pictures of his interview with Castro.

1961

March — Billard, Jules B. "Guantánamo: Keystone in the Caribbean."

Detailed description of the American base at Guantánamo, including information about life on and off the base for Americans, and a discussion of the relationship between the Americans and Cubans.

1947

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An account of the author's trip through rural areas as well as Havana, including descriptions from historical perspectives of smaller towns, a tobacco plantation, and sugar fields.

1933

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The national editions of the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* are likely to be the most available sources outside Florida for day-to-day information on happenings between the U.S. and Cuba. Inside Florida or at larger libraries, *The Miami Herald* has extensive coverage of Cuban and Cuban-American issues.

Information on Cuban Refugees

U.S. Committee for Refugees
Refugee Reports

A newsletter published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 701, Washington DC 20036, telephone (202) 347-3507. Each issue is about 20 pages, and contains detailed information. Issues with extensive coverage of the Cuban refugees are Volume V, Number 21 (November 30, 1984), Volume X, Number 10 (October 20, 1989), and Volume XVI, No. 9 (September 29, 1995.

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A thoughtful, extensive analysis of Cuban refugee children and their problems in adjusting to American schools.

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Cuba Action

A quarterly newsletter listing itself as "An Organizer's Resource for Ending the Caribbean Cold War." Information on the project and its publications can be gotten by calling (212) 366-6703, or faxing (212) 229-2557, or writing Cuba Information Project, 121 East 27th Street, Room 1202A, New York NY 10001.

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Refugee Fact Sheet Series

The fact sheets are designed for service providers and others assisting newcomers to the United States. The booklets contain a basic introduction to the people, history, and culture of different refugee groups and include topics such as geography, economy, history, social structure and gender roles, language and literacy, education, religion, art and music, food and dress, festivities, names, and features of the language.

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